

Modern Slavery: Obstacles to Creation

Dion H., September 2023.

Creation is vital to our existence and freedom: embodying your individuality through expressing yourself creatively, tackling emerging problems by creating new solutions, and perhaps most of all: being able to stand on your own feet by creating your own values, instead of following those of others.

However, from childhood onwards, contemporary society challenges our drive to create with various obstacles. Part of this is innate to society: you cannot always make what you want, for instance because it involves the property of others. This is generally a healthy limitation. In this essay I want to focus on three other obstacles that threaten Creation, namely consumerism, religion and globalism. These obstacles will tempt you to slip into submission and slavery, and although many a citizen is happy to be a follower and a sheep, you, my reader, might choose to be a leader and a shepherd.

Since the consumer revolution in eighteenth-century England, which in the following century spread over the world, people other than the extremely rich and entitled few started to get involved in consumerism. [1] Today, it has come to the point where there are approximately 6.7 billion smartphones in the world, through which people can just reach in their pocket and be instantly satisfied with their favorite type of entertainment. [2] This development has made it unnecessary for people to go out and create; much estranged from how hunter-gatherers used to live, having to create their own weapons, traps, baskets, housing, et cetera – but also today, in creating huts as kids, shelters on hikes. No effort at all is required to be entertained, no playing tag, no going on trips, no going out. Aside from the isolation that consumerism as such brings, it leaves the creativity of children as well as of adults underdeveloped.

Secondly, religion as an external source of values does not stimulate you to create your own values, but rather declares those sinful. It asks you to simply follow the commands dictated to you and allows you to be consoled that life will consequently be alright, which is naturally very seductive. In submission to the will of a particular God, to be a perfect servant, is what believers ultimately strive to be. This applies in particular to the Abrahamic religions; Judaism, Christianity and Islam. I would like to illustrate this with the common Christian concept of becoming like a child (Matthew 18:1-5); to be dependent, to follow, to be receptive to commands, to be innocent and blindly trust the parents. As I expect this to make it plain to you, I will not elaborate much further, but simply conclude that religion keeps you from creating your own values.

A third obstacle comes to us today in the form of globalism. Following the model of the English school of IR-theory, in order to create an international society it is necessary to have a society with aligned norms, rules and institutions, which will allow us to move to the final stage: a world society where the individuals have shared values and common goals. [3] This is a downright call for herd mentality. Various mechanisms are at play to secure this herd conformity, for example cancel culture and democracy in general. Allow me to share a little rant on democracy:

An individual growing up in today's society naturally fills its heart with ambition to better the world, to fulfill their ideals and to make substantial change. Typically, this happens between the ages 18-22, until one "settles down", or to be more exact, once these hopes are smashed in by repeated failed attempts. It's largely a consequence of democracy that people feel like they cannot make meaningful change in the world, so they tend to matters closer to home. Contemporary historians largely discard the deeds of individuals and typically contribute causes

to broad phenomena. The deeds of great men in the past are vilified and demonised as acts of oppression and megalomania. People that choose to pursue their own ideals are shoven aside as satanists, allegedly egoistic evil monsters. Evaporation of individual pursuit and vanishing of personal influence or grasp on the world gives the people over to the grills of the herd, as the tyranny of the majority is the only thing able to make substantial change. Although democracy bore us great fruit, as it stands currently, I remain dissatisfied.

Next to the challenges of consumerism, religion and globalism, there is a strand of thought in contemporary society through Hegel, Marx, Lacan and Zizek that believes mass hysteria to be constructive towards societal progress. With a society raising these challenges, it is tempting for the individual to slip into the herd, to fade into the masses and swim along with the current. The opposing current would be well-illustrated by Nietzsche in *Thus Spoke Zarathustra*, where becoming like a child is to be innocent and open to new things, their receptivity allowing them to be curious, inventive and ultimately creative. In a society faced with so many challenges, it would be good to become like a child in this sense, rather than to blindly follow commands, as if a slave.

[1] *The Birth of a Consumer Society: The Commercialization of Eighteenth-Century England* by Neil McKendrick, John Brewer and J. H. Plumb

[2] <https://www.statista.com/statistics/330695/number-of-smartphone-users-worldwide/>

[3] *Chapter 3; The English School* in *International Relations Theory*, by Stephen McGlinchey.